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# AIRGRAM

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INFO : AmEmbassy GEORGETOWN, BOGOTA, PORT-OF-SPAIN, THE HAGUE,  
 AmConsul CURACAO **OCT 13 2 28 PM '72**  
 USCINCSO for POLAD

FROM : AmEmbassy CARACAS **DATE: Oct 13, 1972**

SUBJECT : Venezuela/Netherlands Antilles Continental Shelf Dispute

REF : Caracas 7502, 7567, 7796, and The Hague 3838

RS/AN  
 ANALYSIS BRANCH

**File**

SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION

A Dutch diplomat in Caracas recently provided an Embassy Officer with background on the recent discussions between the Netherlands and Venezuela on the continental shelf with the Netherlands Antilles (see referenced telegrams). In brief summary the Dutch diplomat said the following:

--- The overriding consideration for The Hague is to begin negotiations with Venezuela on the continental shelf with the Netherlands Antilles in order to have the problem well out of the way before independence is granted to the Antilles. Those who have been pressing for independence for the Antilles have also been pressing for an early conclusion to law of the sea negotiations with Venezuela. To this end this matter was raised with Caldera when he visited Curacao last year and with Calvani when he visited The Hague last spring.

--- The Venezuelan discovery of oil in the Gulf of Vela had nothing to do with the timing of the most recent Dutch approach to Venezuela. A Dutch note to the Venezuelan government had been in preparation since early August and was received for delivery by Friday, September 22.

--- The press story, which apparently broke in Curacao on September 22, that the Netherlands Antilles had asked The Hague to bring "pressure" on Venezuela must have originated with the government in Curacao, but the Dutch officials did not inform Caracas of the story so that when it was picked up by the Venezuelan press four days later the Dutch Embassy here had still not been able to secure an appointment at the Foreign Ministry to deliver the note. Therefore, when the Dutch

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Ambassador was called in to explain the story, he also delivered the note requesting the beginning of negotiations.

--- The note itself was strong, even though it did not use the word "pressure". The note did "urge with emphasis" that negotiations be concluded prior to the end of 1972.

--- The Dutch have been on excellent terms here with Dr. Calvani and this recent incident has not cooled relations; however, it seems quite clear that The Hague very much wants to get on with negotiations now and Caracas wants to put them off until after the Colombian negotiations are completed.

--- The Dutch believe that as to the specifics of the negotiations Venezuela could agree to a median line concept on the continental shelf and that, if the Colombian problems were not present, the negotiations could be concluded rather quickly. One problem is the territorial sea claims since Venezuela claims 12 miles and the Netherlands claims 3 miles. At one point the distance between Aruba and Venezuela is 15 miles, meaning that Venezuela would take the major portion. The Netherlands Antilles, however, cannot claim 12 miles unless the Netherlands does, which it is not about to.

--- Quite confidentially the Dutch have the impression that to ease problems Calvani might agree on a very preliminary basis to open secret talks soon but the Dutch still doubt that anything can be concluded until the Colombian dispute is cleared up.

GDS

*F. J. I.*

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